

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

The Imperative!

Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
IX. Global Connections

Grade Level: 9–12 (*Note:* Analysis and evaluation; investigative reporting)

Objectives: The student will:

- Read and analyze key documents related to diplomatic negotiations to ensure British neutrality during the Civil War
- Make a decision about the key efforts reflected in the documents
- Share ideas on the importance of the behind-the-scenes work of a diplomat and his Secretary of State
- Draw conclusions about the work of a Secretary of State and his diplomats
- Discover in a second reading of the key documents, the real diplomatic issues at hand and explain in a group “Investigative Report”

Time: 2 class periods with homework

Materials: Documents: 1. **1861** *The Remarks are by no Means Satisfactory* (April 27)
2. **1861** *A Matter not Ripe for Decision* (April 9)
3. **1861** *A Considerable Influence at Work* (May 17)
4. **1861** *Our Relations have Reached a Crisis* (May 21)
5. **1861** *The Art of Diplomacy* (May 21)
6. **1861** *The Crisis Averted* (June 8)
7. **1861** *My Duty was Plain* (June 14)

Exercises: *Listening to the Imperative*

Resources: *Special Notes for the Instructor*

Two large poster boards for an investigative board

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

The importance of British Neutrality after southern secession and the formation of the Confederacy is often overlooked in textbook discussions of the Civil War. This selection of documents will give students a glimpse “behind the scenes,” to discover the intensity of American activity to keep Britain and France from intervening. These documents also show the importance of diplomacy—even in wartime—and the role of the diplomat in assessing a situation for himself and interpreting the instructions received—even those of the Secretary of State.

Charles Francis Adams, the U.S. Minister in London who is at the center of this lesson, is considered one of the United States’ most brilliant diplomats. Historians say that his role in London during the war was as important as that of any of the generals on the battlefield.

Lesson Procedures: Day One

Before class begins:

- a. Have each of the dates of the documents 2-7 listed on the board in a way that students can sign their names under a date
- b. Have a copy of Document 1, *The Remarks are by no Means Satisfactory*, on each student’s desk.
- c. Have six (6) copies of each of the documents 2–7 ready.
- d. Have the clues typed out in two sets, ready to give each group a clue quietly when they are ready.

Class Proceedings:

1. As students come into the room ask them to write their name under a date listed on the board and say nothing.
2. Ask them to read the document on their desk and to make a list of the following points on the exercise sheet, *Listening to the Imperative*.
 - a. The hopes indicated in the dispatch
 - b. The description of the conflict and different descriptive terms used
 - c. Any threats to the British government
 - d. Action taken by a diplomat to convey the importance of this imperative to the British
3. Ask the students to form groups based on the date under which they previously signed their names. (There should be six groups.) Call one student from each group forward to receive an important dispatch; give the student one copy for each group member.
4. Then ask each group to quietly read and record the same key points (from step #2 above) from this second dispatch. They will share their findings within the group.

5. Now, beginning with the April 9 Dispatch Group, have one student from the group read the dispatch aloud carefully so that the other teams can hear what is said. [The reader can dramatize a little by saying things like: "Bulletin, we just got this important dispatch from... etc."]
6. In chronological order, allow a member from each Dispatch Group to share the contents of their dispatch. All the students should record relevant information on their *Listening to the Imperative* exercise sheet. If someone does not understand the dispatch they may question the reader and/or the teacher.
7. After all six dispatches have been read, direct each Group to discuss what they have recorded.
8. Ask each group to determine if their dispatch was sent from **Washington** or from **London**. Group all of those with "Washington" dispatches into one group and those with "London" dispatches into the other. Students should then re-read the dispatches, carefully noting the dates. Tell them that during the next class period, they will really investigate these documents.

Lesson Procedures: Day Two:

1. Ask the student to return to their Washington or London group and create a timeline of when the dispatches were sent and received on a master diagram board. If they like, they can put drawings of characters on their master investigative board and any other clues they discover. Each group may select a delegate to go check on dates from the other group.
2. In this Second Round, it is time to investigate—dig deep into what was really happening in these dispatches. Teacher has notes as to what students should be discovering and will give typed clues every few minutes to the groups. (Clues are at the end of the Lesson.)
3. Ask each group to work together to prepare an investigative report on the events revealed in these documents. The team can divide up the work but should address what they discovered:
 - in the investigative phase
 - what they learned initially when listening to the dispatches, and
 - the responses they recorded on their *Listening to the Imperative* sheet

Create a list of conclusions to relate these documents to dealings between Washington and London. They may refer to exercise sheets, but NOT consult with the other team. Each member of the team should contribute to the report and sign the document.

4. Collect both reports, then ask a different member of each team to report their conclusions to the whole class. It will be interesting to see if they all interpreted the clues the same way. The teacher can also provide a summary from the special teacher notes.

5. As a homework assignment, ask students to find out how dispatches were sent between diplomats and the U.S. Secretary of State. (No phones, no Internet, no tweets, no face book, etc.) How long did it take to send a message between Washington and London? ■

Clues to Diplomacy

Clue A. Who is sending the first dispatch? Why? What does he know?

Clue B. How long has Seward been in office? How is he cutting his own throat?

Clue C. Has Adams seen Seward's instructions when he sends his first report? What is he trying to do in this grave situation?

Clue D. To whom is Seward really responding in his famous May 21st dispatch?

Clue E. Why is Adams' May 21 dispatch masterful? Has he received instructions from Seward? How do he and Russell sidestep the problem of war?

Clue F. When does Seward get Adams' masterful report? Is he as determined to go to war? How is Adams going to carry out Seward's May 21st instructions at this point?